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FACT AND FANCY IN THEORIES CONCERNING ACTS

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The friendly treatment which my recent investigation of the Acts of the Apostles¹ has received at the hands of experts in New Testament science encourages me to add here a few observations, in part supplementary, in part replying to queries or objections raised by reviewers of my work. The main conclusions of my pamphlet, though doubted by some, have been accepted to an extent which has surprised me. Among the objections urged are some which appear formidable until they are examined closely; I hope to do justice to them in the following pages. As will presently appear, I have been led to change my opinion with regard to one matter which, though incidental, is not without importance. In general, it is not likely that any of the readers of the essay have realized how far-reaching will be the consequences of accepting the demonstration as to the original language of I Acts (i.e., Acts 1:1b-15:35). Thus my colleague Professor Bacon, in an article published in a recent number of this *Journal*,² speaks in very generous terms of my demonstration of an Aramaic original for I Acts, and of my previously attempted proof of a Hebrew original of the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel.³ He says (p. 3): "Torrey's earlier demonstration (the term is not too strong) is now supplemented by equally cogent proof that Acts 1:2-15:35 is a translation from the Aramaic. . . . The more careful the reader's verification of Torrey's evidences of translation, the more hearty will probably be his consent to the verdict." So also pages 11, 17, 18. Yet it seems

¹ *The Composition and Date of Acts*. "Harvard Theological Studies," No. 1. Cambridge, 1916.

² Benjamin W. Bacon, "More Philological Criticism of Acts," *American Journal of Theology*, XXII (1918), 1-23.

³ "The Translations Made from the Original Aramaic Gospels," contributed to *Studies in the History of Religions Presented to Crawford Howell Toy*, 1912.

plain that Bacon after all regards this demonstration as hardly more than a highly interesting *curiosum*, important chiefly to philologists, though of course valuable to all New Testament scholars as showing through what a history our documents have come. That it has any important bearing on what he would term "critical" theories of Acts he evidently would not admit for a moment. For him the book is the same old *corpus vile* now as before, still capable of dissection into the same half-dozen discordant sources, laboriously chopped and glued into their present conglomeration by an editor. He does not feel that the great problems of the book and its origin are brought any nearer to solution. I think that it will eventually become evident that when the proof of an Aramaic original for I Acts is once granted there is no escape from certain other conclusions which are much more comprehensive and important.

The material of this preliminary essay of mine was limited in its scope and very summarily presented; I was able to bring forward in it only a small part of the evidence on which I myself was relying. I realize that its full significance will remain obscure until I can undertake a more general discussion, taking in the wider field and establishing firmly some things which at present are half appreciated or flatly misunderstood. Thus in Bacon's article, especially pages 17 f., he recognizes, and assumes that I must also recognize, principles of literary criticism which I know to be quite unsound; I shall have occasion to speak of them in the sequel. There are also certain views long held—now perhaps universally held—by scholars with regard to the editorial and other literary activities of Luke which if correct would render some of the conclusions in this investigation of Acts less cogent. I know these views to be mistaken and believe that I can gain general credence for my own view, which, however, I have not yet even expressed, to say nothing of attempting to set forth the reasons for holding it.

Professor Foakes Jackson, in an interesting review of my *Composition and Date of Acts*,¹ puts his finger on one of these points. He says on page 352: "That Luke translated this [the Aramaic document of I Acts] with meticulous accuracy, adding nothing of

¹ "Professor C. C. Torrey on the Acts." *Harvard Theological Review*, X (October, 1917), 352-61.

importance of his own and adapting nothing to prove those points which he desired to establish, is, *judging by his use of Mark and Q*,¹ to me at least incredible." But when the evidence of translation in the Gospels has been mustered (and it has never yet been examined with sufficient care) it will be seen that the activities such as Professor Jackson has in mind nearly all pass out of Luke's hands into those of the author of an *Aramaic* Third Gospel. Luke's own work there is almost solely that of translator, and its characteristic features are precisely those which appear in his rendering of I Acts. Even before the proof of this is furnished, however, it seems to me that the evidence in I Acts alone, cumulative and consistent as it is, is quite sufficient of itself, without the added support from the Gospel, to justify the characterization given in my pamphlet (pp. 40 f.). I presume that Professor Jackson's use of the word "meticulous" is not intended to convey any disparagement, for all those who, like Professor Jackson himself, have studied carefully the ancient renderings from Semitic into Greek know that the method which I have tried to characterize in examining the Greek of the first half of Acts is in all its essential features the typical method of the translators of that day. As I attempted to show in my "Translations Made from the Original Aramaic Gospels," the workman then had a different conception of his task from that which now prevails. Better than most modern translators, he knew what he was about, and it is most fortunate for us that his aim was what it was, in spite of the glaring faults of his method. Even the careless, the slovenly, the stupid among the workers in this difficult field, habitually exhibit the same standard of *verbal* precision and even the same ingenuity (to us often perverse ingenuity) in attaining it which we can observe in I Acts.

Luke, like all the best translators of his day, is cautious and reliable—barring the inevitable slips, which are likely to be of the very greatest value to us.² His procedure in the Gospel and the Acts does not necessarily afford an index of the relative importance

¹ The italics are mine.

² In my pamphlet, p. 40, I spoke of Luke as "*singularly* faithful to his sources." The adverb is a misleading one, and I corrected it in the margin of my own copy almost as soon as it was issued. "Very" or "decidedly" would have been better.

to him of the documents he was rendering; he and his fellows would have pursued the same method if the texts in hand had been of minor interest. There is another phrase in the sentence quoted above with regard to which I have a query. Can Professor Jackson be perfectly sure that there were "points which Luke desired to establish"? I of course admit the possibility that he had his own pet theses which he was even willing to introduce into his translations, though I do not know where the evidence of this could be found; but it seems to me far more probable that he conceived his duty to be that of a collector of authentic Palestinian records, by translating which he could give Theophilus and his like a trustworthy account—the *best native Palestinian account*—of the Christian beginnings. And I believe that the narrative which he thus made available was in fact much truer in its essential features than anything which he could have produced by editing and composing according to his own ideas. He was not a "historian" according to our notions, and even if he had been he doubtless would have been at a loss to find the main thread and the true perspective in much of this strange material.

Professor Jackson also deals generously with the main feature of my essay, the demonstration of Aramaic underlying the Greek of I Acts. He accepts the proof as valid for most of the first fifteen chapters, but is inclined to doubt it for chapters 13–15, not because the evidence in the latter case is essentially weaker, but because of a long-standing and widely accepted theory of the composition of the book, according to which these chapters are made a part of the document which continues in chapters 16 ff. Bacon, in the above-mentioned article (p. 4, note 2, and pp. 13, 22 f.), shows himself under the influence of the same theory. He admits indeed that the Greek of these chapters is a rendering from Aramaic, but asks us to believe that this Aramaic was itself the translation of a Greek document. It is in fact not possible to hold that the demonstration of translation-Greek is valid for a part of I Acts but not for the remainder. The evidence of an underlying Aramaic original is fully as strong in all parts of chapters 13–15 as it is in the chapters preceding. The Aramaisms which I happened to mention are by no means the only ones that could be pointed out; the texture of

the Greek is Aramaic through and through. I feel quite sure that when the question has been adequately studied scholars will come to the conclusion that there is no tenable middle ground; it is necessary either to reject the theory of translation *in toto* or else to include the whole of I Acts in the hypothesis.

Professor Jackson, like many other New Testament scholars, takes it for granted that a friend and companion of Paul must be a disciple of his, that is, an adherent and exponent of his theology and a champion of his more extreme views in matters of controversy. The man who wrote the account of Paul's journey to Rome, it is said, must have occupied the point of view represented by the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians and must have disapproved the statements of the fifteenth chapter of Acts. This is pure assumption, however, and nothing more; it is not only unsupported by anything in Acts, but the evidence, if we admit that there is any, points in the opposite direction sufficiently to give trouble to the adherents of the theory. But is the assumption justified at all? I do not believe that Professors Jackson and Bacon would wish to insist even on this general statement: Everyone who becomes a friend of a great theologian and travels in his company understands and approves his theology. Neither in modern nor in ancient times could such a statement hold even approximately true. Nor is this any better: Every friend and companion of a man who has been engaged in a sharp controversy holds precisely his point of view and will suppress, if possible, any statements that might be interpreted in such a way as to make him appear in certain controversial utterances to be speaking with some personal bias.

Is it not from just this major premise, however, that Professors Jackson and Bacon and their fellows take their start? Professor Jackson is mistaken when he also attributes such a view to me. He says (p. 358): "Dr. Torrey points out . . . the impossibility of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 having been so described by a companion of Paul's." But Professor William Jerome Wilson, in his essay entitled "The Unity of the Aramaic Acts,"¹ to which I shall refer later, is right in supposing (p. 328, note) that what I said of this import on pages 42 f. of my pamphlet was intended

¹ In the *Harvard Theological Review*, XI (July, 1918), 322-35.

simply as a concise statement of the prevailing "critical" views, not as an expression of my own opinions. I should, however, have expressed myself more clearly. Professor Jackson, it must be observed, not stopping with the statement quoted above, goes on to say: "But does not Dr. Torrey ignore the difficulty of accounting for a close friend of Paul's having incorporated into his narrative so damaging a statement as that relating to the proceedings of the Apostles and the promulgation of the letter to the churches of Syria and Cilicia?" That is, he would say, granting for the sake of argument the existence of an Aramaic document, including chapter 15 (which then would presumably *not* be the composition of a personal friend of Paul's), is it easily conceivable that Luke (or whoever compiled the book) should have permitted this chapter to remain in his translation or transcription of the document which lay before him? Now we know very little indeed about the compiler. We do not know whether he was Jew or Gentile,¹ Hellenist or proselyte, opinionated or diffident; to what extent he would be inclined to harmonize and to what extent to leave his sources as he found them. We have only very slight and partial knowledge of his point of view, and no knowledge whatever as to the immediate conditions and impulses under which he wrote, save the bare fact that he had an acquaintance named Theophilus, whom he hoped to instruct and not mislead.

We are therefore obviously not in a position to be dogmatic; and yet it seems to me that the question asked above can be answered with confidence: It *is* very easily conceivable that Luke should have incorporated Acts 15 in his book, and that too without the least hesitation or unwillingness. Even if we should grant that he held the views conjectured for him by Professor Jackson, we know nevertheless that he did, at least occasionally, allow his sources to say things contradicting each other or his own narrative—this is the case both at the beginning and at the end of the Aramaic

¹ This is true even when the compiler is supposed to be Luke. It is indeed customary to argue from Col. 4: 10 f., 14, that Luke was a Gentile; but the wording of verse 11 is so ambiguous and difficult as to render the conclusion quite unsafe. See, for instance, the rendering of the English Revisers, who follow the Greek and take the consequences, and Schmiedel's desperate struggle with the text in *Encycl. Bibl.*, "Luke," cols. 2830 f. Is it not probable that the original reading here was οὗτοι μὲν οὖν instead of οὗτοι μόνοι? This is just what we should expect Paul to write, and the accidental corruption of ε to ο is very common.

document, as well as in one or two other places—and that in translating he was notably cautious and exact. This all gives real ground for the belief that he wished to deal faithfully with his sources and not to refashion them according to his own ideas. This belief is not difficult in the least, especially as the mode of procedure—giving each source its own right—is the rule and not the exception in oriental historiography. Even an eager partisan of Paul might well have incorporated views belonging to the extreme opposition, if he found them in a document which he thought important.

I can, however, see no reason for believing that we have here before us partisans and party documents. What is there in either the Judean narrative or II Acts that is distinctly controversial or one-sided? I am well aware that this has long been the way of regarding the book in certain schools of New Testament interpretation; it is the postulate which lies at the basis of most of the analyses of Acts. In its extreme form it assumes—and also finds—a considerable cluster of discordant sources forced into an unhappy union by a man whose principal characteristic was zeal for the interests of his own small party. By way of partial illustration I quote a sentence or two occurring incidentally in Bacon's article. He speaks on page 19 of considerations showing "the systematic adaptation of the sense of II Acts away from what would agree with the Pauline Epistles, to conform it to the Petrine standard made central in the chapter on the Apostolic Council."

In other words, II Acts must have agreed with the Pauline Epistles; it does not, in fact, agree with them; ergo, it has been garbled. This is strikingly like the Mohammedan doctrine of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures: They definitely foretold and described Mohammed and his work; no such definite predictions and descriptions are to be found in the Bible as it now exists; ergo, the Jews and Christians have falsified their Scriptures.

Bacon goes on to say: "The main evidence is the misinterpretation of Paul's action in 16:3 and 21:26 and the suppression and perversion of the real object of the great delegation to Jerusalem." Again, on page 21: "Chapters 6-8, with their sequel in 11:19-26, contain a presentation of the same central idea, which is fundamentally at variance with the compiler's. The best efforts of the *Autor ad Theophilum* to harmonize and adjust remain powerless

to suppress the testimony of this fundamentally Hellenistic account of Gentile mission work," etc.

This is similar reasoning turned in the other direction: The author of Acts and the author, i.e., compiler, of the Aramaic document were both partisans of the narrow view and aimed to trim all their sources into agreement with their own ideas; in point of fact I Acts contains much that is distinctly liberal; therefore we must conclude that they either overlooked these telltale wide-hearted elements or else did not know how to get rid of them.

A few lines farther down the page Bacon comes to the mention of *another* "source" which similarly baffled both the "Aramaic compiler" and the "Autor ad Theophilum": "In like manner the harmonizing transpositions, omissions, and corrections of the editor are of no avail against the irrepressible testimony of Acts 12:1-23; 9:32-11:18. Here we have another presentation of the same fundamental idea, and one which is equally free with that of the Hellenistic source." And on page 22 we read of "the Aramaic harmonist," "this forced harmonization," "the camouflage of chapter 15 with its compromising 'decrees of the Apostles and elders,'" and the way in which the author of the Book of Acts, in appending the Greek Acts of Paul to the Aramaic document, "was of course compelled to narrow down its representations to the same harmonizing standard his Aramaic predecessor had adopted."

To sum up: According to the theory of partisan sources we have before us in I Acts a collection of uninspiring little documents produced by insignificant little writers who without exception were possessed either of very limited information or of slight regard for the truth, or both; all combined by a mean and dishonest little editor. For this last-named author, as he is described, I, for one, could feel only contempt; and this appears to be the reaction which he and his activities produce upon Professor Bacon.¹ Now, far be it from me to say that these and similar conclusions are groundless, but I do know with certainty that they are quite unnecessary. I

¹ Let no one suppose that any such manipulation of documents as is here postulated was either usual or regarded as respectable in those days. Bacon speaks on page 13 of "the known phenomena of ancient book-making," but what he describes is the construction of ancient books as it is carried on chiefly in modern workshops and lecture-rooms. See further in the concluding instalment of this article.

think I am as determined as I know Professor Bacon to be to follow the evidence, according to my lights, wherever it leads. The evidence seems to me both plain and altogether consistent, and in this latter particular I have the advantage over Professors Jackson, Bacon, and their fellows, as can be seen from their own admissions in the preceding pages. I agree entirely with Bacon's conclusion that the author of I Acts and the author of the whole book were men of kindred spirit; I said this with some emphasis in my pamphlet, page 65. What is still more interesting and important, they were thoroughly *representative* men, speaking for the great body of the Christian church of that day. Each of the two was far from deserving the reproach laid by the great Apostle to the Gentiles at the door of certain Christians of the time, that they said: "I am of Paul's party," or, "I am a follower of Cephas." These two writers show everywhere a refreshing breadth of mind and a warm, catholic spirit; they are not adherents of any party but are trying to record truthfully, as far as they are able, the successive main steps in the wonderful transition from Jewish sect to world-religion.

Bacon and his fellows exclaim at the liberal elements in I Acts and wonder at their presence. The reason for it is that the author of I Acts, who wrote these chapters, was a liberal man. Wonder is also expressed that so much in II Acts should seem to show "conformity to the Petrine standard." The reason, I take it, is this, that events and opinions actually took the course described. Of course the great body of the church would have inclined toward "the Petrine standard" if it had been aware of any such thing. Paul could not possibly have rivaled in authority the great pioneers, the Twelve, *at that time*, and that he in fact did not is shown plainly enough by his own emphatic, almost indignant, protestations that he *is* an apostle and as good as any of them. Of course he had his own strong following, which grew steadily stronger; but it would have been strange indeed if either the author of the Third Gospel or the author of the Judean document had been of the number, however great a leader they may have seen in him, and however epoch-making they felt his work to be. They were under the still more potent spell of Galilee and Jerusalem, and could see the beginnings of the church in something like their true proportion.

Professor Jackson, in the sentence quoted above, speaks of Acts 15 as embodying a statement of the course of events that would be "damaging" to Paul's reputation. I confess that after a good deal of careful study of the chapter from my own point of view, and comparison of it with Paul's Epistles, I am quite unable to see in it anything "damaging" to Paul or to anyone else. Certainly neither Paul nor the Twelve Apostles had reason to fear the truth. I have no doubt that the story of the Council and its findings told in Acts 15 is substantially true, though of course we expect embellishment in details in such a narrative. I certainly have no question that every statement made by Paul regarding these and the related matters was believed by him to be strictly in accordance with fact.

As for Gal. 2, wherein lies the difficulty in pronouncing its agreement with Acts 15 perfectly satisfactory, when we take into account the totally different nature of the two documents and the totally different circumstances under which they were produced? We are familiar enough in our own day with the phenomenon of widely dissimilar accounts of the same happenings given in good faith and with good reason by men speaking and writing from diverse points of view; it is one of the interesting features of human testimony on which we comment daily. One reporter sees and presents one aspect, his fellow presents another, and each report is true as far as it goes. Why should we deny to these ancient records the freedom which we allow unhesitatingly and with full approval in any modern instance? What Paul gives in his Epistle is of course an *ex parte* account; it could not be otherwise. He is speaking as an advocate, and it would seem that the greater part of his immediate hearers felt him to be in a decided minority and perhaps even seriously mistaken. The events which he mentions when writing in this strain are as a matter of course only those which show that he was justified in his own view—as he certainly was. In his account of the Council he thinks of himself as the hero. He would have thought this in any case, since he was human, and it was in fact due mainly to the splendid labors accomplished by him and Barnabas that new action by the church was necessary. To the members of the Jerusalem church, however, and to all the great body of

believers who looked thither for inspiration, the foremost heroes of the occasion were of course Peter and James, even though the view which triumphed was that of which Paul had been the principal champion. It is possible, moreover, though perhaps not necessary, to suppose that Paul's recollection of the visit to Jerusalem and the scene there was somewhat colored by the events of the intervening years.

We know, in the first place, that there was some difference of opinion between Paul and the apostles, who were the leaders of the main body of the church. Just what the difference was *we do not know*, nor to what extent, if at all, it touched upon matters that were essential. Sounds of real *controversy* we have only in Paul's Epistles. In Acts we have merely incidental evidence of what sounds like an unimportant conflict of views (in 21:20-26). This certainly suggests the probability, rather than the mere possibility, that the question at issue was not one of grave concern. This probability is only strengthened by the crucial passage in Paul's writings, the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. The tone of the chapter is distinctly that of a discussion of matters of limited, not universal, importance. Paul feels personally hurt, that is beyond all question (see especially vs. 6), and believes that his influence and the success of his great work are being impaired; more than this, he is persuaded that the leaders ("whatever they are!") are pursuing an unwise and harmful policy. He writes with some impatience, and the phrases which he uses, where we could wish for information, are not definite, but general, more or less rhetorical, and colored by his mood.

Bearing in mind the fact that what is really of great importance to the individual apostle and his work may not be vital to the interests of the whole church, we seem to see the probable reason why II Acts lays no stress on the matter. What we know of the subsequent history testifies to the same effect. Professor Ropes, in his *Apostolic Age*, states very clearly and cogently the fact that Paul's real *controversy* was not with the Twelve Apostles, nor with Peter, but with the "Judaizing" Christians, whose efforts very justly alarmed and exasperated him. The issue between him and them was *vital* for the whole church and the Christian gospel, for they insisted on the

Jewish law, or at least a part of it, as an essential part of the new faith. Ropes describes their activities (pp. 91-93), but shows that though they were at first comparatively numerous and sometimes influential, and always very active and bitter, in their opposition to Paul and Peter and James and the orthodox church generally, yet they were never anything more than a minor sect and were soon hopelessly left behind (see pp. 93-98). He remarks that their efforts became more and more a personal attack on Paul¹ and says (p. 94), what is especially important for our present inquiry: "In Paul's later writings this controversy with Judaizing emissaries from the church at Jerusalem disappears. It was by no means the controlling characteristic of the Apostolic age." It seems plain, in view of the preceding, that the reason why the note of controversy disappears from Paul's writings is that the occasion for it had become insignificant, not that the convictions of the apostle had been changed or weakened. If, as some suppose, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, and the apostle Peter in particular, had held and taught that certain Jewish ordinances were *essential* for Jewish Christians, could Paul possibly have laid down his weapons in this way? *Was Christ divided?* Such teaching would have been a fatal blow at the very heart of the gospel, and no one knew this better than Paul. Is it conceivable that Peter and his colleagues should have been so blind as not to see this also?

What then does the apostle mean in Gal. 2:7 by his slightly impatient phrase, "the gospel of the circumcision"? We are bound at least to test the hypothesis that he has in mind a *policy* rather than a doctrinal requirement. This agrees very manifestly with the tone of the whole chapter, which does not in the least suggest the presence of such a fundamental principle of the faith as that just mentioned. It agrees also with his other utterances and with what he tells us of his co-operation with the Twelve. It is also

¹ The apprehension felt by Paul before his last visit to Jerusalem, expressed in Rom. 15: 30-32, is sometimes interpreted, in an unwarranted way, as though he thought that the main body (!) of the church at Jerusalem was hostile to him. He knew very well what power even a small band of "Judaizers" could wield there, and what an opportunity would be given them, by his arrival, to stir up the mob of the city against him. This is just what happened. Of course the apostles and the Jerusalem church were absolutely powerless under such circumstances.

thoroughly consonant with what we are told in the Book of Acts. Peter in his speech in Acts 15 is represented as distinctly cutting loose from the standard of "Jewish law for the Jews" in verses 10 and 11: "Neither we nor our fathers could bear the yoke; we believe that *both we ourselves and the Gentiles are to be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus.*" Yet Peter's attitude toward the Jewish law was different from that of Paul. This would seem to mean that he held that it was better for the Jewish Christians to be circumcised, *for the sake of preserving the continuity of the Jewish people.* There were plainly strong reasons for this, some of which we can appreciate even at this distance. Foremost among them was Old Testament prophecy, with its precious promises for the "*eternal people,*" עַם עוֹלָם. The best-known and most cherished of these prophecies were precisely for the messianic age, in which Israel was to hold a favored place in the multitude of the saved; could it be that, with the advent of the Messiah, Israel should now disappear? The end of the present age, they all felt, was not far distant. Peter and his colleagues, we may then suppose, took the ground that Jewish Christians should continue in the observance of their inherited laws and customs and should even be "zealous" for them (Acts 21:20), *provided always* that all understood and admitted that these ordinances now had merely racial value and were quite destitute of any significance for Christianity. This might well have seemed to the great majority of Jewish Christians at that day a most desirable policy, since it was only the *requirement* of these rites that would have been false to the spirit of Christianity. It was a difficult teaching to maintain in its purity, however; and history eventually made short work of it.

Paul's attitude toward this policy would then seem to have been one of disapproving acquiescence. His own feeling, emphatically expressed, is that in Christ all distinctions of race have been done away; the Jews should not hold any peculiar position in the church. He saw clearly how the policy was sure to be made to appear the doctrine; and the way in which it actually was thus transformed proved the greatest single hindrance to his work. We should probably say, from our standpoint, that Paul's attitude here was wiser and more farseeing than that of the others, but it certainly

was less natural. On the other hand, he must have felt as strongly as anyone the necessity of conciliating the Jews, on whose ultimate attitude so much depended. It is evident, both from the record and from his own frequent utterances, that he *was* conciliatory, though he was not willing to go to the length of some others, including his colleague Barnabas. As for the Jews themselves, who had not yet become Christians, he of course would have desired them to continue in their own laws and customs.¹

The narrative of Acts and the statements in Paul's letters agree completely with what has been assumed here with regard to the attitude and mutual relations of Paul and the Twelve. There were doubtless many unrecorded instances of mild controversy, in which now the one, now the other view prevailed; also instances in which the one or the other disputant yielded either because of new light or for the sake of the greater good. When Peter was rebuked by Paul at Antioch he was presumably in the wrong, though it appears from Gal. 2:13 that even Barnabas did not think so. In that case we may take it for granted, since he was not a small man, but a great one, that he frankly acknowledged his error. He had meant well, and under other circumstances his action might have been justified. There was certainly no fundamental and lasting difference of opinion between him and Paul. The latter, in turn, showed himself ready to yield his general preference in specific cases as long as no principle was involved. "All things are *lawful* for me," he said, "but all things are not *expedient*." He would gladly be (he tells us) a Jew with the Jews if by any means he might gain them over. The incident narrated in Acts 16:3, the circumcision of Timothy, was a case in point. No principle whatever was involved, for it was simply a matter of conciliation; otherwise we can be perfectly certain that Paul would not have done as he did. Beyond what is told us in the single sentence in verse 3 we know nothing whatever about the circumstances under which the action was taken; and it is the circumstances that ordinarily bring about the decision in such matters. Another occurrence of the same sort is narrated in 21:23-26, an incident in which there is difficulty only for those who are inclined to find it there, or who misunder-

¹ Compare, e.g., Acts 24:14, 26:3, 28:17, and see also below.

stand Paul's attitude. Where is the evidence that he wished to forbid to Jewish converts the right of continuing in their customs, or that he refused to meet halfway the Jews themselves who were inquiring about the new sect? There is no such evidence, but there is plenty to the contrary.

We—all of us—need to keep in mind, what we very easily forget, that our reconstructions of ancient history from meager records are sure to be machine-made and arbitrary and possibly most mistaken where we feel surest of them. The actors in the few scenes which happen to pass before our eyes were human beings, not puppets, and their actions were not simple and reducible to the formulas which we constantly and of necessity apply to them, but complicated by their personalities, which we are far from understanding in any case, and by a great variety of circumstances about which we have only the slightest knowledge. When, for instance, Bacon asserts (p. 19) that the statement in Acts 24:17 shows either ignorance or dishonesty on the part of the narrator or else "prevarication" on the part of Paul, the natural reply is that there is indeed profound ignorance in the case; but it is our own, not that of the contemporary historian.

It may be remarked here that one principal reason why so much in the Book of Acts seems to Professors Jackson and Bacon artificial and improbable is because of the late date which they have assigned to it. If I myself supposed Acts 15 to have been written in the second century A.D., or late in the first century, I should find it much more difficult to understand and to accept as a substantially true account. There is not a whisper of sharp controversy in the chapter. This is not because the writer was ignorant or dishonest, but because the sharp controversy involving a considerable part of the church had not yet arisen. It was at a later day that the dispute became widespread and the situation really acute. Wilson in his "Unity of the Aramaic Acts"¹ (pp. 329 f.) has some excellent remarks on this point. He says very truly that the chapter sounds as though it were written "in the first flush of enthusiasm" and "before the opposition had assumed its later and more sinister forms." One of his remarks I would like

¹ See above, p. 65, n. 1.

to amplify a little. He says that "our Aramaic author was not a trained historian, capable of foreseeing that opposition would inevitably break out again in other and perhaps violent forms." Even a trained historian, however, would have made as bad a mess of predicting the near future as our untrained historians do of reconstructing the remote past. Even Peter and the apostles, including Paul, could not have foreseen what was going to happen, although probably they and every other well-informed man knew that the trouble was not *all* over, and felt that the findings of their Council would be likely to need supplementing at an early date. As for Paul, it is reasonable to suppose that neither his views of church polity nor his theology had been finally and rigidly settled at this time. The account of his further work, as it is continued in chapters 16 ff., sounds distinctly as though he shared the feeling of the others and was satisfied, for the time being, with the triumph achieved at Jerusalem; and *if the account is practically contemporary*, this is precisely what we should expect. In general, I believe that every chapter in the remainder of the book, from 16 to 28, is much more comprehensible and convincing when seen to be a contemporary record than when supposed to have been compiled a few decades later.

I confess, of course, my failure to understand the details of Acts 15:20 and 28, the specific recommendations to the Gentile converts. There lies behind them a great background of ideas and habits of which our ignorance is almost total. Only this much seems quite clear, indeed certain, from the whole context, that no one of the four things named is either a religious requirement or thought of as connected with specifically Jewish customs. Both Peter and James have just said plainly and with emphasis: There shall be no yoke laid on the Gentiles. On what ground is the favorite term "compromise" applied to the decision of this Council? Apparently only on the ground of verse 21: For from days of old the teachings of Moses have been set forth, by the Jews, in all the Gentile cities. But is not this merely James's (or the narrator's) rather naïve explanation of the fact that all through the known world these four things were normally regarded as the requirements of morality and decency? The Gentiles, the writer seems to

say plainly, *hold the same opinion as the Jews with regard to these particular things*. This, he believes, must be due to Jewish influence continued through many generations. What the Council said to the converts of the pagan world was this:

We have no ordinances whatever to impose upon you, nor any restrictions which would have the appearance of turning you in the direction of Judaism. But we remind you that the new religion will be judged in the world by the conduct of its members, and therefore ask you to keep yourself from those things which by people of sound morals everywhere are regarded as offensive. If you can do this, it will be well for you [εὖ πράξετε].

Where, in all this, is the compromise? It is of course possible to doubt the writer's implied assertion that these things were included in what was commonly regarded as the highest standard of morality in the Gentile-Jewish world at this particular time. We do not know from other sources whether it was so or not. Here apparently is an opportunity for us to learn something from a contemporary record, though what we are told takes us only a very short distance. The decision of the Council at Jerusalem was (so we are explicitly told in Acts; so it is plainly implied in Gal. 2; so all the clear evidence seems to show) that Gentiles and Jews were to be absolutely on an equality as regards the religious requirement. It is quite true that encouragement of the Jewish Christians to continue in their racial customs would often and of necessity create the appearance of an "inner circle" in the brotherhood; and wherever this was true it could only be irritating and perhaps misleading to the Gentile converts. This seems to be precisely what Paul means in his indignant words to Peter, repeated by him in Gal. 2:14. But the dispute is over a matter of policy, not of principle. When my colleague Professor Walker¹ speaks of Peter and James and their associates as thenceforth working among the Jews, "of course with maintenance of the law" as binding, he expresses what is now widely believed, but, I think, not justified. I should prefer this instead: "*never* with acknowledgment of the Jewish law as binding," seeing that this is the express statement of Acts 15, against which we have no clear testimony whatever. Neither Paul, nor Luke, nor Peter, nor the Aramaic document knew anything about

¹ *History of the Christian Church* (1918), p. 28.

the "double *standard*" which plays such an important part in the theory with which I am taking issue.¹

We are not in such a position of certainty in these difficult matters as to enable us to cut loose from any one of the few documents which we are so fortunate as to possess. Bacon (p. 3) accuses Harnack of fitting the Pauline Epistles to "the procrustean bed of Acts," and seems himself to wish to turn the operation in the other direction. But is it not better to do without procrustean beds? Whether my interpretation of the supposed disagreement between Acts 15 and Gal. 2 is intrinsically more probable in its details than those which I am antagonizing is a question by itself, and perhaps not an important one; what is of very great importance is the fact that more than one interpretation is possible. For mine the claim can at least be made that it is based on the extant documents just as they stand and regarded as straightforward and ungarbled records.

To return for a moment to the gratuitous theory of Luke as an exponent of Paul's teaching: It would be quite possible, on the evidence of our sources, to argue that Luke had some distaste, not only for theology in general, but also for Paul's in particular. It is truly astonishing how little theological interest of any sort is to be found in Acts 16-28. Arguing a priori, according to current notions, one might well have pronounced such a phenomenon inconceivable. Beyond all question Luke was not a theologian, and since that was the case we may be sure that Paul's theology was a hard nut for him to crack. Paul was not such a clear, methodical, and systematic writer that it is easy to comprehend at first hearing the doctrines and arguments which he sets forth. I wonder whether any human being ever accomplished this feat. It is strange that no ambitious young scholar has yet propounded the thesis that Luke was actually a bit bored by Paul's preaching and controversial discussions, much as he loved the man. We have some evidence that Paul was not a captivating speaker (compare II Cor. 10:10 with Acts 20:9); and it may not be purely accidental that Luke, who was glad to be Paul's traveling companion, especially on the water, generally left him, as the record

¹ See, for instance, Bacon's article, pp. 21 f.

seems to show, whenever he stayed long at any one place! Of course he could not possibly have foreseen that (thanks to the providential preservation of a few letters) the church was destined to build itself up on Paul's teaching rather than on that of Barnabas, or Apollos, or Peter, or John, or still others.

But from my point of view the most surprising example of maltreatment of the source in the interest of the theory is to be found in the exegesis and "critical analysis" of Acts 28 by the school to which some of my reviewers belong. The process is the familiar one of deciding at the outset what the nature of the document *should have been* and what it *must have contained*; and then, since it does not say what was desired, assuming that it has been altered.

I would first like to consider a statement made by Professor Jackson on page 359. It is possible that I have misunderstood it, and it may be that I do him injustice; if so, I am heartily sorry. He speaks of "the problem of reconciling Acts 28:17 *ad fin.* with all that is elsewhere known of Paul's attitude toward the Jewish leaders." Well, what *was* his attitude toward the Jews? The question, like all such questions, is more complicated than we sometimes assume, and we cannot at this distance be quite sure of knowing all about it. There are some facts, however, which are perfectly well attested. He had been fiercely antagonized by the Jews from the very first (as a matter of course), and his life had often been in danger from them. He held the unshakable conviction—as did also the Twelve Apostles and all of the "orthodox" church—that the Gentiles had the same right to Christianity as the Jews and had no need whatever to come in by the way of Judaism. On the other hand, he had been a Jew himself and was proud of the fact. His heart yearned toward his own race with its glorious heritage of history and religious truth and its unique Law which had been the "schoolmaster" to bring the world to the knowledge of Christ. In his Epistle to the Romans, 10:1, he exclaims: "The desire of my heart and my prayer to God is that Israel may be saved." Did he mean this, or was it a mere form of words? Was he willing to do anything himself toward this end? See also in the same epistle his emphatic words at the beginning of chapters 3 and 11. "What advantage has the Jew? Much, in every way!"

"Could God abandon his own chosen people? Never!" And in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, 9:20, he says: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win over the Jews; to those under the law as though I myself were under it, in order to win over those under the law." Had Paul forgotten all these things? He was not the man to be driven from his course by continued persecution, or to claim release from responsibility because a majority of his people had rejected him. As he says in I Cor. 10:33, "I seek not my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved." We are fortunate enough, moreover, to know what had been his customary method of beginning work in any new city or region to which he journeyed. He seems invariably to have begun with the Jews, if any were to be found, approaching them as a Jew who was loyal to his people; telling them that he had a message which was *for Israel first of all*; declaring that their laws and ordinances and the Prophets were merely God's preparation for something better; and seeking to show them the roots of Christianity in their own customs and beliefs as based on their sacred Scriptures. Thus he had done at Salamis (Acts 13:5), Antiochia (13:14 ff.), Iconium (14:1), Philippi (16:13), Thessalonica (17:1 ff., where it is said that he preached first to the Jews "according to his custom"), Corinth (18:2-5), and Ephesus (18:19; 19:8).

We should therefore feel very sure that at as early a day as practicable after his arrival in Rome he would arrange for a meeting with the leading Jews of the city. This is what he does. We should also expect that he would emphasize (as always elsewhere, under like circumstances) the value of the religion of his people, with its laws and customs, given through Moses, which afforded them special access to Jesus the Messiah. This also he does. What he says to the Jewish leaders in Acts 28:17-20 is, it seems to me, in perfect agreement both with what is narrated in Acts and also with what we learn from Paul's Epistles. He had never at any time or in any way antagonized the Jewish laws and customs *as holding good for the Jews*. Indeed, he himself, though they no longer held good for him, had more than once observed them for the sake of spreading the gospel, and had prescribed this course to other Christians, for whom also these customs were quite worthless

save as an occasional means of conciliation (I Cor. 9:20; Acts 16:3; 21:26). It would have been strangely blind and contrary to all his teaching if he had wished to take away from his own people that bridge by which the God of their fathers had destined that they were to pass over into the Christian brotherhood. *Potentially* the Law was already done away and a thing of the past; *in actual fact* it was to continue to the end to be the "schoolmaster" for those who had been obdurate at first. Paul certainly did not suppose that the Jews who refused to listen to *his* preaching had lost their last opportunity! Where then is the problem of reconciling Acts 28:17 ff. with what is elsewhere known of Paul's attitude toward the Jewish leaders?

Professor Jackson (*ibid.*) goes on immediately with the following sentence: "How could a disciple of Paul who knew of the Epistle to the Romans make [in Acts 28:17-31] the Jewish elders of Rome ignorant not only of his existence but of that of the Christian sect?" I can only reply that neither of these statements is justified. Verse 22 says in so many words that the existence of the sect *was* known to them (!); and in verse 21 it is *not* said that they had not heard of Paul, but only this, that they had heard *no evil* of him. It might seem from the very fact of their using this qualifying adjective, *πονηρόν*, that they meant to imply their knowledge of his existence; probably in fact they had heard of him; but as it may be that they are merely making a polite reply to his introductory words in verses 17-19 (in which he had said *that the Jewish authorities had judged him worthy of death*), it is unsafe to draw any conclusion.¹

Professor Bacon² discusses this last chapter of Acts at greater length, from a point of view which appears to be the same as that

¹ I confess to feeling somewhat baffled by the sentence here quoted from Professor Jackson, for whose opinion I have such high regard. Very soon after the publication of my "Composition and Date of Acts" he was so courteous as to send me a first draft of his objections to some of my conclusions, and among his arguments was the very one which I am here discussing. I replied promptly, stating my view of Acts 28:17 ff. substantially as above; his statement in the *Harvard Theological Review* was therefore not made hastily, but presumably after renewed consideration of the passage. I should be tempted to suspect some misunderstanding on my part if it were not for the fact that Professor Wilson in his "Unity of the Aramaic Acts" (p. 329, the long note) also takes issue with Professor Jackson on this point, using the same arguments and very much the same words that I had used in my letter of December 3, 1916.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 18 f.

of Professor Jackson. His statement of the argument is more detailed and his critical position sufficiently clear. Verses 17-29 are regarded by him as a later interpolation. Two reasons are given for this belief. The first is that the passage does not contain what Bacon would have it contain. It has no mention of "the great Roman church," and deals entirely with Jews instead of taking account of the Epistle to the Romans, although Paul some three years before this had announced to the brethren at Rome his intention of visiting them some day. Bacon finds here an "extraordinary discrepancy." Why should this writer "report Paul's entry precisely as if Rome were virgin soil for the missionary" and "depict Paul's beginning there as if no such church existed"? To be sure, the matter-of-fact reader at once interjects the plea that the Roman church *had* received the first mention,¹ the narrator telling of Paul's "warm welcome by 'the brethren' through a body of delegates sent all the way to Appii Forum."² Ah, *this* was written by "the Diarist," not by the interpolator! is Bacon's reply. His first argument, compactly stated, is accordingly this: Verses 17-29 are an interpolation because they do not say over again at greater length what had already been said in verse 15. Which sounds a bit arbitrary.

In the second reason which he gives³ for his theory he turns from sins of omission to those of commission. The passage is seen to be a later insertion because of its literary poverty, in that it deals in mere tiresome platitudes. It "conforms completely to the stereotyped formula of the Apologia" (whatever that may mean); it gives "a stereotyped representation"; the interpolator "brings his story to an end with the usual moral"; he puts us off with "glittering generalities." The cut-and-dried formula which arouses his scorn is the

¹ We do not know what weighty messages from Paul these brethren may have taken forthwith to the rest of the church. We do not know what strong reasons (we can easily conjecture some of them) Paul may have had for wishing to approach the Jews *as soon as possible*, considering the circumstances of his arrival. It is in any case natural to suppose that the writer of this history could see at least as plainly as we can that any extended mention of the Roman church and its history and doings would lie quite outside the plan of the book as he had conceived it.

² Quoted from Bacon, *op. cit.*, at the beginning of p. 19.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

following, as he himself states it: (1) the gospel is offered to the Jews; (2) a few believe, the rest oppose; (3) the messengers turn thereupon to the Gentiles, declaring that so the Scriptures had predicted; (4) the Gentiles gladly receive the message. Now it is certainly true that we should not expect to find, in the writing which this purports to be, a parrot-like repetition of an overworked program. If the presence (real, not merely fancied) of such a literary weakness can be shown, we might see in it some excuse for condemning the passage as inferior to its context, though perhaps not even then for rejecting it as an editorial insertion. Let us see. Undeniably these things are stereotyped formulas and glittering generalities for Professor Bacon; possibly they were such even at the time when he supposes the Book of Acts to have been compiled; but this fact of itself does not prove that they were such for Luke and his readers. It is certainly not necessary to remind Bacon that every stock phrase has had its day of primitive strength, and that for every conventional mode of representation there was a period when it was new and fresh. I hope I am not dealing unfairly with the argument when I say that it seems to me just a little like reasoning in a circle, thus: How do we know that verses 17-29 are late? Answer: Because of the stereotyped formulas. But how do we know that this representation was stereotyped at the time when the passage was written? Answer: Because it is late!

Taking Bacon's observation for what it is worth and giving Acts 28:17-29 the benefit of any doubt which there may be as to its date, we certainly obtain the presumption that the passage is *early*, not late. There is no justification, moreover, for speaking of the representation here as "stereotyped"; it is merely a simple and natural account of *the actual course of events*. To take up the four successive steps of the "formula": (1) *Did* Paul, on his arrival at Rome, give his own people, the Jews, an opportunity to hear what he had to tell them? It is quite incredible that he should not have done so, not merely because it had always been his custom everywhere, nor even when to this is added our knowledge of the loyalty which he so constantly and even passionately expresses, but still more because of the very circumstances of his journey; he had been brought to Rome because of alleged wrongs done *to*

the Jews. What he had done was really "for the hope of Israel," and his defense concerned these Roman brethren of his vitally. Should they not hear from him his new truth? (2) Did the Jews of Rome in fact accept Paul's gospel? No one will doubt that what happened is precisely what is told us in verse 24; we can hardly imagine any other result. Most of them would have none of his new teaching. (3) What can he possibly have done, thereupon, but tell them the stern truth, and just why it was that he, Saul the Pharisee, the pupil of Gamaliel, was the apostle *to the Gentiles*? Of course he appealed to the Scriptures; without their support he would have been badly off indeed, and they were his only effective weapon at this juncture. These Jews, like Paul himself, *believed* the Scriptures. Quotations like this one from Isaiah were not platitudes to them. (4) Paul's added word (vs. 28), that what the Jews rejected the Gentiles would accept, is both the indispensable conclusion of his argument and also just what Luke desired for the ending to his book.

This is all natural and inevitable and simply told. There is no ready-made program here save that furnished by unchanging human nature; neither the facts nor their order could possibly have been different. Even this, however, is not all. Bacon, on page 20 of his article, approves, even with some emphasis, my statement of the underlying idea of the Book of Acts, that it is "the wonderful transition from Jewish sect to world-religion." Now it is certainly the most natural supposition that the author of the book conceived and executed this idea under the inspiration of the time when the transition actually took place, not a generation later, when it was already an old story. Why suppose, without necessity, a weak and improbable literary performance instead of a record whose compelling motive is evident? Might not even that creature of hypothesis, "the Diarist," have had sufficient insight to enable him to see and chronicle this wonder? The fact is, this very passage, verses 17-29, is eminently fitted to be the heart of the chapter, *if what we have before us is a contemporary account*, whoever wrote it. If I could suppose it to be late I could almost agree with Bacon that it is not impressive. Not merely this passage, however, but the whole chapter, taken just as it stands, gives evidence of coming from

the time and place of these occurrences. The very things mentioned by Bacon as astonishing tell their plain story to this effect. The strikingly brief mention of "the brethren" in verse 15 is natural enough *at Rome itself* and within a short time of the event. If Luke had been writing in Syria or Asia Minor it would have been more likely to occur to him to tell who these brethren were. If he had been writing some decades later, when the little company had really become "the great Roman church," and after Paul's letter to the brethren there had become the property of the whole Christian brotherhood, he would pretty certainly have given what Bacon chides him for not giving, some mention of the progress of Christianity there, and perhaps an allusion to the Epistle to the Romans. As far as Theophilus is concerned, we may probably take it for granted that he had heard of the presence of Christians in Rome, but that he had no special reason for interest in their welfare.

As for the Epistle to the Romans, if Acts 28 is a contemporary narrative we can be pretty certain that Theophilus knew nothing about the letter, and therefore no allusion to it, or to the relation of Paul to the Roman church, could have been of any value. To suppose, however, that the compiler of Acts, *writing many years later*, could have contented himself with this summary treatment of the Roman material "taxes credulity to the breaking point."¹

So far then from having before us here the concoctions of a later day, we have a fresh draft from the fountainhead. If ever any authors had the right to draw this picture of the transferring of the new religion, it belonged to these two, the Aramaean and the Greek; for their productions, so far as we know, were the very first to portray it! Wilson² remarks the fresh enthusiasm of the Aramaic history, at its climax in chapter 15. The same thing, in a different literary dress, is to be seen in chapter 28. The true climax of the whole narrative is the latter half of this chapter, where the story is told of the last meeting between the Jews, the rightful "heirs of the promises," and their best friend, Paul. To a representative body of their leading men at Rome, the capital city of the world, the apostle gives his message; and when they will not hear it he utters his reproachful warning for them and all

¹ See Bacon, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

their race, ending with the long-familiar words from the Book of Isaiah.¹ This quotation (which, or its equivalent, it is easy to believe that Paul actually used on this occasion), pronouncing the judgment of God himself on his as yet unbelieving people, made the best possible ending for the particular drama sketched by the Judean author and Luke. It is indeed the real ending of the book; though several considerations, the artistic among them, made it quite indispensable to add a few words telling whatever could be told of Paul's fate.

¹ Bacon, pp. 10 f., 18 f., treats this passage from the best known of all the Prophets, so strikingly apposite to the circumstances depicted all through this book, from the beginning to the end, as though it had been discovered by Mark and could be obtained only from him (in fact only a small part of it is in Mark)! It would be very strange if Luke had not heard Paul use it often. It may be added, in passing, that Bacon's description, at the beginning of page 11, of Luke's proceeding in his Gospel, 8:10, is not borne out by the facts.

[*To be concluded*]